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Submitted by Joan Nichols, Executive Director, Connecticut Farm Bureau Association

Testimony in support of HB 6503 AN ACT CONCERNING THE SITING OF ANAEROBIC DIGESTION FACILITIES ON FARMS.

Senator Cohen, Representative Gesko, Senator Slap, Representative Palm, and Members of the Environment Committee

Connecticut Farm Bureau Association seeks your support of HB 6503 for on-farm anaerobic digesters. In 2019 PA 19-35 was passed which exempted certain on-farm anaerobic digesters (ADs) from the requirement to obtain a DEEP solid waste permit. That law set thresholds on the amount of food waste an on-farm digester could procure and still qualify for the exemption. Currently a qualified exempt facility must fuel its anaerobic digester with at least 50% farm-generated organic waste from an animal feeding operation (e.g., animal bedding, manure) and not more than 5% from food waste.

The language in HB 6503 expands the opportunity for AD facilities sited on farms to procure additional food waste and still come under the exemption set forth in PA 19-35. The proposed change would set the limit of allowable food waste based on conformity with the comprehensive nutrient management plan (CNMP) for that specific farm's operation.

According to the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, a CNMP is a conservation plan unique to animal feeding operations. A CNMP includes a grouping of conservation practices and management activities which, when implemented as part of a conservation system, will help ensure that both production and natural resource protection goals are achieved.

This change would allow those exempted facilities to procure additional food waste while maintaining compliance with the environmental requirements identified in the farm's CNMP. This additional food waste could add additional income to the farm, make these projects more economically feasible and help address the state's current food waste disposal problem all while creating a renewable energy source.

This bill also seeks to expedite the DEEP permitting process for on-farm exempted AD projects. The timeline to obtain permits in Connecticut has proven to be lengthy and costly. Reducing the timeline for permitting will help expedite the construction of these on-farm digesters.

Connecticut Farm Bureau Association (CFBA) is a non-profit membership organization representing nearly 2,500 farming families in the state of Connecticut.